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ABSTRACT

Surveys were conducted to investigate contemporary thought regarding organizational practices at the elementary level, with particular attention to identifying the extent to which departmentalization was supported by research and actually employed in 24 elementary schools in the Midwest and in 41 Des Moines elementary schools. Four committees worked independently to review the literature (over 1,500 abstracts and journal articles were examined), survey the philosophies of 25 midwestern universities, and assess elementary school practices in the Midwest and Des Moines. The reports of each committee are presented sequentially, and all three survey questionnaires are provided. Frequently rates from the responses of university department chairs (n=25), selected Midwest school superintendents (n=24), and Des Moines' elementary school principals (n=41) were tabulated. The results failed to provide evidence to suggest that organizational structure has a significant impact on student achievement or development. Results also indicated that departmentalization is incorporated into the primary grade levels (kindergarten through third) to a limited degree. The extent of departmentalization increased in the intermediate grade levels four and five. Current practices in Des Moines schools were consistent with those found in research. (JAM)

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

Self-Contained and Departmentalized Classroom Structures

Elementary Department
Des Moines Public Schools
Des Moines, Iowa

May 1989

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Abstract

This study was conducted to survey contemporary thought regarding organizational practices at the elementary level. Particular attention was given to identifying the extent to which departmentalization was supported by research and actually employed in elementary schools in the Midwest and in the Des Moines Public Schools. Four committees worked independently to review literature, survey philosophies of midwestern universities, and assess practices in elementary schools in the Midwest and Des Moines. The results failed to provide evidence to suggest the organizational structure has a significant impact on student achievement or development. Results also indicated departmentalization is incorporated into the primary grade levels, kindergarten through third, to a limited degree. The extent of departmentalization increases in the intermediate grade levels four and five. Current practices employed in the Des Moines schools are consistent with those found in research.

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Introduction

The philosophy of the Department of Elementary Education of the Des Moines Public Schools is to provide a planned comprehensive program of learning experiences designed to develop the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social abilities of each child. Schools provide a climate to stimulate creative thinking, encourage creative expression, develop responsive and responsible citizenship, and prepare students for their next educational endeavor. An objective-based curriculum provides the opportunity for each child to develop skills, understanding, and talents.

A sequential program to develop the basics of reading, math, and language arts balanced with opportunities to develop concepts, skills, and appreciation in social studies, science, health, art, music, and physical education is implemented through various organizational structures throughout the district. Current policy allows each building principal to determine the organizational structure used to provide daily instruction based on the strengths of the instructional staff, the number and needs of students served, and the structure of the building.

Administrators incorporate various degrees of departmentalization into this organizational structure. Students in self-contained classrooms are assigned to one teacher for the majority of the day; but may receive art, music, and physical education from specialized teachers. Students in a semi-departmentalized structure are assigned to one teacher for the majority of the day but may receive instruction in an academic area from one additional teacher. They may also receive instruction from specialized teachers for art, music, and physical education. In a departmentalized structure, students receive instruction from three or more teachers during the day in addition to art, music, and physical education.

Statement of the Problem

In April 1988, a small group of concerned parents presented evidence of a perceived trend toward increased departmentalization at the elementary level and potential negative consequences related to such practices (Premature Departmentalization in Des Moines Elementary Schools, Soike, 1988). They petitioned the Board of Directors to examine the evidence and discontinue departmentalization at the elementary level. The Board agreed to review the issue and asked the Department of Elementary Education to complete an investigation and submit a report of their findings.

A thorough investigation called for surveying a variety of sources. Committees were formed and charged with one of the following responsibilities:

1. Review the literature relative to the self-contained and departmentalized elementary organizational structures.
2. Determine what midwestern universities are presenting in teacher education programs regarding organizational structures at the elementary level.
3. Determine the type of organizational structures midwestern school districts are using at the elementary level.
4. Determine the type of organizational structures currently used and review the history of organizational structures in the Des Moines elementary schools.

Each committee worked independently to fulfill their obligations but met to synthesize the findings and formulate recommendations. The following sections describe the methodologies employed by each committee and their results. Final recommendations based on the findings are also included.

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Presented by

*Jan Drees
Lois Smith
Amy Welch*

Introduction

The issue of elementary school organization has been debated since the beginning of the century (e.g., Gibb & Matala, 1962; Lamme, 1976; Slavin, 1987). The question has sometimes centered on the relative advantages of the departmentalized and self-contained organizational structures and their effects on student achievement and social adjustment. This review by the Des Moines Public Schools was conducted to survey the literature regarding these two structures at the elementary level.

The review summarizes three types of information found in the literature. It includes research studies reported during the past 30 years although little empirical evidence was available beyond 1971. Regardless of the lack of statistical evidence, educators debated the question of school organization by publishing opinions and observations. The literature also provides the results of surveys conducted to determine organizational practices in elementary schools.

This review has been divided into four parts. Section one addresses the effect of departmentalized and self-contained structures on student achievement and is based largely on the results of research studies. Section two includes research and opinion on the effects of the organizational structure on the social adjustment of students. The third section summarizes opinion concerning the relative advantages of the two structures. It includes information on philosophies regarding specialist and generalist teachers and student-teacher rapport. The fourth section reviews the results of surveys conducted to determine the organizational structures used at the elementary level.

Definitions

One of the difficulties found when reading and discussing the literature was the lack of clear, consistent definitions. Not all writers and researchers used the same terms when referring to the same organizational structures. For example in the past, the term "departmentalized" was used to describe the use of specialist teachers for art, music, and physical education. Today this is an accepted practice and is generally defined as part of a self-contained structure. Some researchers reserved the use of the term departmentalized to refer to the structure in which students change classes for every subject. Others tend to use the term departmentalized for the many degrees or variations in structure which fall between self-contained and totally departmentalized. These inconsistencies have made comparisons of various organizational structures more difficult.

Academic Achievement

The literature reveals an ongoing effort to identify the type of school organization which will provide for effective instruction. Yet, when educators look to research as a basis for making decisions, few studies provide clear support for either structure. Jarvis (1969) states, "Research studies about organization for instruction are frequently contradictory and almost always too fragmented to be of any real value in helping the staff decide upon which organizational framework to employ."

Early investigations by Gerberich and Prall (in Morrison, 1966) suggested departmentalized structure may improve achievement in specific subject areas. Fourth grade students from departmentalized schools scored significantly higher on measures of achievement in arithmetic and English than students from self-contained schools. Sixth grade students from a departmentalized structure also scored significantly higher in arithmetic than those from a self-contained school. However, fourth and fifth grade students in self-contained schools performed better than students in departmentalized structures in geography. Fourth grade self-contained students also performed better than departmentalized students in reading. Comparisons of achievement in other subject areas between these fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students were not significant.

Gibb and Matala (1962) also found contradictory results. They reported the findings of a two year study on the use of specialist teachers for mathematics and science in grades five and six. No significant difference was found in achievement in mathematics between students in a self-contained classroom and those in a departmentalized situation at all ability levels. However, achievement was significantly higher in science for students in the departmentalized plan regardless of intellectual level.

Results of another study revealed fifth and sixth grade students in a departmentalized structure scored significantly higher than students from self-contained classes on achievement tests in all areas except mathematics (Coffin, 1961). No significant differences were found in mathematics achievement scores for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in the same study. Coffin also failed to find significant differences in achievement scores for fourth grade students in any subject area.

Only one study reported consistent results favoring a departmentalized structure; however, this study was limited to an examination of one grade level. Case (1971) found significantly higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics for departmentalized fifth grade students.

No definitive answers resulted from a three year study reported by Elseroad (1965). He examined achievement of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in departmentalized and self-contained schools. The results indicated students in self-contained classrooms scored significantly higher than students in departmentalized classrooms on mathematics and reading tests. No significant differences were found for these students in other subject areas. Students of lower abilities in self-contained classrooms scored significantly higher than similar students in departmentalized classrooms in all subject areas.

Morrison (1968) studied the effects of organizational structure on mathematics achievement among students of various socioeconomic backgrounds. Students from the middle socioeconomic level in a self-contained structure performed significantly better than students from a departmentalized structure. There were no significant differences in achievement scores among students from the lower socioeconomic level. Evidence from students in the upper socioeconomic level was inconclusive. Becker (1988) also suggested the effects of organizational structure on student achievement may vary by the students' socioeconomic background.

Results of a study by Grooms (1967) found some support for the self-contained structure. She conducted a study to determine which type of school organization would result in greater achievement among fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. Achievement tests showed students in self-contained classrooms scored significantly higher in spelling, language, word knowledge, and social studies study skills at all grade levels. Fifth and sixth grade students from self-contained classes scored significantly higher than students from departmentalized classes in mathematics. There were no significant differences found for fourth grade students in mathematics. No significant differences were found in reading, social studies information, and science for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students.

In contrast, Ward (1970) found significantly greater gains in reading and science among fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in self-contained classrooms. No significant differences were found in mathematics and social science achievement between the two organizational patterns (in Slavin, 1987).

A number of other studies failed to find a significant difference between students from self-contained and departmentalized schools on achievement measures. Jackson (in Morrison, 1962), studied achievement of fifth, seventh, and eighth grade students over a period of three semesters. He found no significant differences in student achievement between departmentalized and self-contained plans in work-study skills, silent reading, mathematics, general science, and social science. Hosley (in Morrison, 1966), compared students in schools departmentalized for art, music, science, physical education, and library to students in self-contained schools. The results of achievement tests revealed no significant advantage for either organizational structure. A study conducted by Stoddard (1961) was the only one found to include first through sixth grade students. Results showed no significant differences in achievement between the two structures after a two-year study.

In summary, contradictions were found even when an attempt was made to find logic in the results of empirical research. Case (1971) found the mathematics achievement scores of fifth grade students from departmentalized classes to be significantly higher than scores of students from self-contained classes. Grooms (1967) found the opposite with self-contained fifth graders scoring higher and Gibb and Matala, (1962) found no significant differences between the two groups. Research does not provide evidence demonstrating one structure is more conducive to improving student achievement than the other. A review of recent literature revealed current research is focusing on other variables: various grouping arrangements, team teaching, collaborative education, and effective schools. The contradictory results of empirical research and the limitations of the studies conducted, indicate no conclusions can be drawn supporting one structure as superior to the other. The results of these studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF ACHIEVEMENT
THE SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM AND DEPARTMENTALIZATION

STUDY BY	YEAR	PREVAILING STRUCTURE	GRADE AND/OR SUBJECT AREA STUDIED
Otto	1923	Self-contained	Grades 5-8
Otto	1930	No significant difference	Grades 4-6
Gerberich	1931	Departmentalized	Grades 4, 6, Math
		Self-contained	Grade 4, English
		No significant difference	Grade 4, Reading
			Grades 4, 5, Geography
			Grades 4-6, All other comparisons
Jackson	1953	No significant difference	Grades 5, 7, 8 (Morrison, 1966)
Hosley	1954	No significant difference	Grade 6 (Morrison, 1966)
		Self-contained	Grade 6 (Slavin, 1987)
Spivak	1956	Self-contained	Grades 7-8
Woods	1959	Self-contained	Grades 8, 9
Stoddard	1961	No significant difference	Grades 1-5
Coffin	1961	Departmentalized	Grades 5-6, All except math
		No significant difference	Grade 4
		No significant difference	Grades 4-6, Math
Gibb	1962	No significant difference	Grades 5, 6, Math, All ability levels
		Departmentalized	Grades 5, 6, Science, All ability levels
Elseroad	1965	Self-contained	Grades 4, 6, Math & Reading
		No significant difference	Grades 4, 6, All other subjects
		Self-contained	Grades 4, 6, Pupils with IQs 75- 89
Grooms	1967	No significant difference	Grades 4, 6, Reading & Science
		No significant difference	Grade 4, Math
		Self- contained	Grades 4, 6, All other comparisons
Morrison	1968	Self-contained	Grades 6, 7, Middle socioeconomic, Math
		No significant difference	Grades 6, 7, Lower socioeconomic, Math
		Contradictory	Grades 6, 7, High socioeconomic, Math
Ward	1970	Self-contained	Grades 4-6, Reading & Science
		No significant difference	Grades 4-6, Social Science and Math
Case	1971	Departmentalized	Grade 5, Reading and Math
Becker	1988	Departmentalized	Grade 6, High socioeconomic levels
		Self-contained	Grade 6, Low socioeconomic levels (in Slavin, 1987)

Social Adjustment

Social adjustment is recognized as an important component in the development of the whole child (e.g., Culyer, 1984). Limited empirical research is available regarding the effects of school organization on the social adjustment of children. Educators have also expressed opinions addressing this issue. Several note the departmentalized structure may interfere with the social adjustment of elementary school children (e.g., Broadhead, 1960). However, proponents of a departmentalized organizational structure suggest the social adjustment needs of elementary students may be met in a variety of structures (e.g., "Toward Improved School Organization," 1961).

The claim that departmentalization is detrimental to the social adjustment of students is not supported by the research. Studies by Broadhead (1959), Livingston (1961), and McCue (in Gibb and Matala, 1962) found the social adjustment of students to be significantly better in departmentalized structures than in self-contained classes. Broadhead studied the effects of organizational structure on the social adjustment of fifth graders. He compared the results of an inventory administered to students in departmentalized schools to the norm group for the inventory. Preliminary evidence suggested that the norm group consisted of students from self-contained classrooms. Students from departmentalized schools demonstrated significantly higher levels of social adjustment than students from self-contained classrooms. Livingston used a similar design to explore the effects of a departmentalized structure on social adjustment. Students enrolled in departmentalized classes for grades three through five showed significantly higher levels of social adjustment than student from self-contained classrooms. In another comparison, students enrolled in departmentalized schools for five years demonstrated significantly higher levels of social adjustment than students from self-contained schools and students enrolled in departmentalized classrooms for only three years. McCue also reported a departmentalized plan was more effective in developing social adjustment. His findings indicated growth in "total adjustment" was significantly greater for students in departmentalized programs than for students in self-contained classrooms.

No empirical evidence was found to indicate self-contained classrooms promote social adjustment more effectively than departmentalized classrooms.

Results from three other studies showed no significant differences in the social adjustment of students from self-contained and departmentalized classes (Grooms, 1967; Jackson, 1953; Lambert, Goodwin, and Wierma, 1965). In 1953, Jackson studied the effects of

classroom organization on the personality adjustment of students. The findings indicated adjustment was a function of the teachers' ability to establish rapport, and was independent of the organizational structure of the school. Lambert, Goodwin, and Wierma compared the personal and social adjustment of students in team situations to students in self-contained classrooms in grades one through six. They concluded organizational pattern did not effect pupil adjustment. Grooms included an examination of the effects of organizational structure on social adjustment of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. The results failed to demonstrate significant differences.

Following a review of available data, Anderson (1962) stated, "It must be assumed that the adjustment of children in departmentalized schools is at least, not inferior to that of children in self-contained classrooms." Ackerland (1959) suggested in general, teachers failed to identify negative consequences associated with adjusting to several teachers, and concluded the experience could be valuable. Table 2 summarizes the results of the studies on social adjustment.

Table 2. COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
THE SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM AND DEPARTMENTALIZATION

<u>STUDY BY</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PREVAILING STRUCTURE</u>	<u>GRADE AND/OR SUBJECT AREA STUDIED</u>
Jackson	1953	No significant difference	Grades 5, 7, 8
McCue	1957	Departmentalized	Elementary
Broadhead	1959	Departmentalized	Grades 1-5
Livingston	1961	Departmentalized	Grades 1-5
Lambert	1965	No significant difference	Grades 1-6
Grooms	1967	No significant difference	Grades 4-6

Opinions and Observations

Educators differ in their opinions regarding relative advantages of self-contained and departmentalized organizational structures. The same benefits are claimed by advocates for each structure. No empirical evidence was found to substantiate any of these opinions.

Discussions of self-contained and departmentalized school organizations have often focused on the philosophical concepts associated with specialist and generalist teachers. This emphasis can be seen partly as a result of the knowledge explosion and the need for classroom teachers to pass on complex information in rapidly developing areas of science and technology. In the traditional self-contained classrooms one teacher is responsible for instruction in every curricular area. Anderson (1962) stated, "...only an extraordinary individual - a Leonardo da Vinci - could have an expert knowledge of all of these areas." Howard (1969) wrote, "We can't possibly know enough about everything to teach what is expected...Specialization seems like an answer."

The specialist teacher is most often associated with the departmentalized form of school organization. Ideally, the specialist would have additional training, in-depth knowledge, and a high level of interest in certain subject areas. It is suggested that the greater the teacher's understanding of the subject matter, the greater the probability excellent instruction will occur. Specialists are thought to be better able to meet the educational needs of students due to their expertise (Gibb & Matala, 1962). Anderson (1962) presented a strong case for specialization when he reported the results of a survey in which "...only 4 of 260 teachers consider themselves well prepared in all the subjects they taught".

The generalist teacher is most often associated with the self-contained classroom structure. Proponents of this organizational pattern contend that instruction at the elementary level should be child-centered rather than subject-centered. They maintain this structure allows the teacher and student to develop more in-depth and intimate knowledge of each other. The advantages for the teacher are knowing each student's strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits which enables the teacher to better accommodate the student's individual learning style. The advantage to the students is having a closer relationship with the teacher. Elkind (1988) contended elementary school children do not have a "fully consolidated sense of self". It is important for teachers to know these students as "whole persons" and to reflect that sense of "wholeness" to the students. Self-contained classrooms minimize the number of teachers with whom students must interact, and provide teachers with greater opportunities to know their students, giving students the security of working with one teacher all day.

The same logic has been applied to the arguments in favor of departmentalization. Anderson (1962) stated, "Perhaps the most significant sense of knowing the child is understanding him in relation to his educational development. It is at this important level that the competent specialist teacher has a big advantage over his generalist counterpart. The teacher who has mastery of an area of knowledge has a frame of reference for evaluating the child's development. He can interpret the child as he is now in terms of how he should be when his schooling is complete."

O'Reilly (1963) described a potential detrimental effect of a departmentalized structure on student-teacher rapport. Increasing the number of classes reduces the teachers' sense of responsibility to individual students and reduces students' sense of belonging. Culyer (1984) wrote, "If two or more teachers share the responsibility of helping children acquire competency they will tend to operate in isolation from each other. The children are the losers." Anderson (1965) suggested the advantages of more competent instruction by a specialist teacher is "countervailed [*sic*] by the uncoordinated, fragmentary experiences the child receives at the hands of independent teachers, each unaware of his colleagues' work and each seeing only a certain aspect of the child's growth and performance." Elkind (1988) suggested this disruption may be more detrimental to younger children. At the elementary level, barriers to learning tend to be related to the emotional development of children and not the content of the subject area.

Gayer (1961) challenged the assumption that rapport is damaged in a departmentalized structure, "It is even possible there is more likelihood for an introverted child to find rapport when there are several personalities from which to choose." Anderson (1962) supported this position and acknowledged even the best teachers may have difficulty relating to some of their students. He stated, "No teacher - no matter how wise, mature, and emotionally suited for teaching - gets along with all his pupils." Tanner (1960) also asserted a departmentalized structure increases the likelihood that students will meet a teacher with whom they can develop a positive relationship. It is important to note that no research was found to indicate positive student-teacher rapport is unique to either structure.

Similar arguments are used by proponents of both structures when talking about the area of individualization. Thornell (1980) suggested the particular needs of elementary students "necessarily dictates" use of a self-contained organizational structure. Gibb and Matala (1962) reported teachers in self-contained classrooms have more opportunity to individualize. They can

allow the students to move ahead when they are ready or utilize additional time to learn a concept if needed. Although individualizing is difficult in any structure, Jarvis (1967) stated self-contained classrooms provide greater opportunities for individualizing. Culyer (1984) observed that self-contained classrooms seem to be especially appropriate for hyperactive, insecure, and slow-learners.

Other writers feel that specialist teachers are better able to individualize instruction. They know the finer approaches to teaching and the unique psychological aspects of learning in their specialty area. Since there is considerable variation in the ability and skill levels among elementary students, grouping to individualize instruction provides opportunities to meet individual needs. Lamme (1976) suggested grouping students is easier in a departmentalized structure. Anderson (1962) agreed that individualization is easier for the specialist teacher. Teachers can conceive goals for their area and read signs that tell of a child's misunderstanding. These signs might be misread by the generalist teacher with less knowledge of the subject matter continuum.

The majority of writers agree integration of subjects is difficult in a departmentalized structure (e.g., Bahner, 1965; Culyer, 1984; Jarvis, 1967; Ward, 1970). Bredekamp (1988) agreed learning and development at the primary grade level cannot be divided into specialized subject areas and taught by a variety of teachers. The opportunity to integrate is maximized in a self-contained structure (e.g., "Toward Improved School Organization," 1961). Anderson (1962) challenged the assumption that integration facilitates learning and stated, "Integration has been a byword for thirty years, yet it remains an article of faith rather than a utilitarian principle."

Those who favor self-contained classrooms contend that this type of organization reduces the time required to organize materials and maximizes student time on task (Culyer, 1984; Ward, 1988). The time students spend on gathering materials and getting prepared for each class in a departmentalized structure could be better utilized for instruction (Elkind, 1988). Self-contained classes also provide teachers with greater flexibility to organize the presentation of various subjects (Ward, 1988).

Those who favor subject area specialists feel they provide greater continuity in the curriculum within and between grade levels. They have access to, and are more informed about, curriculum development and materials. This allows them to be more flexible with the curriculum

objectives and still accomplish their overall goals. Since specialists teach fewer subjects, they prepare more comprehensive and effective learning experiences (Gibb and Matala, 1962). Gayer (1961) claimed it is unrealistic to expect teachers to have the talent and find the preparation time to teach each subject well.

It begins to become obvious that no definitive statements can be made regarding the advantage of one organizational pattern over the other. Writers use the same arguments to justify both structures. Furthermore, no research was found to support the fact that any advantage is unique to one structure. This has lead some writers to question the importance of organizational structure in effective instruction. Gibb and Matala (1962) stated, "Good teachers are effective regardless of organization."

Organizational Practices

Gibb and Matala (1962) studied the results of several surveys conducted to determine organizational policies of elementary schools. The findings demonstrated great fluctuations in the organizational patterns used during the first half of the century. There is also evidence to suggest principals use a variety of structures in their buildings. Barnes (1961) surveyed organizational practices employed nationwide. The results indicated 44 percent of the schools surveyed used departmentalization for at least one subject. Few subjects other than music, art, and physical education were departmentalized below grade four. Most principals reported no intention of modifying the degree of departmentalization in their structures.

These results were supported by a survey of elementary school principals conducted by the Research Division of the National Educational Association (in Robinson, 1961). When asked to indicate the best plan for organizing elementary instruction, approximately 70 percent of the principals preferred a self-contained structure. The remaining 30 percent endorsed a departmentalized plan. Of the principals who preferred a departmentalized structure, seven percent recommended departmentalization below grade four.

Rogers and Palardy (1987) provided a more recent review of organizational patterns used in elementary schools. The results of their survey, although limited to six southeastern states, demonstrated a tendency to increase departmentalization with each grade level. Results of this survey are reported on Table 3.

Table 3. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PROFILES AND PATTERNS
Percentage of Principals Reporting Each School Structure

	Self-contained	Partial Self-contained	Semi Departmentalized	Total Departmentalized	Team Teaching
<u>Kindergarten</u>					
461 schools	92	6	0	0	2
<u>First Grade</u>					
491 Schools	83	11	4	1	1
<u>Second Grade</u>					
494 Schools	76	16	5	1	2
<u>Third Grade</u>					
506 Schools	69	19	9	1	2
<u>Fourth Grade</u>					
493 Schools	52	23	18	4	3
<u>Fifth Grade</u>					
449 Schools	42	21	26	8	3
<u>Sixth Grade</u>					
205 Schools	30	18	33	18	1

Source: Rodger M. S. and J. M. Palardy, "A Survey of Organizational Patterns and Grouping Strategies Used in Elementary Schools in the Southeast," Education, 108, Fall 1987, pp 113-118.

McPartland, Coldiron, and Braddock (1987) provided a comprehensive view of practices employed nationwide in kindergarten through grade nine. Grade level was found to predict organizational practices and there was considerable overlap in practices used in all grades. McPartland et. al. also noted local needs promote integration of both "self-contained" and "departmentalized" characteristics into the structures at each grade level particularly among middle grades. As a result, these researchers recommended viewing structure along a continuum anchored by "student orientation" and "subject orientation". While few structures could be classified as completely student centered or subject centered, the concept of a continuum allows for the integration of structures based on specific needs. McPartland et. al. contended that such a view provides a better explanation of actual practice.

Conclusions

This review of literature was an attempt to define current thought regarding the use of departmentalized and self-contained organizational structures at the elementary level. The literature fails to provide conclusive evidence that one structure is more effective than the other. Little empirical research addressing this issue has been conducted in the past thirty years. Available studies are limited by inconsistent definitions and methodological flaws. A significant proportion of the literature consists of opinions expressed by educators.

While it is evident that educators continue to differ in their opinions regarding the relative advantages of departmentalized and self-contained organizational structures, most agree that both have a place in the educational system (e.g., Bahner, 1965; Gibb, 1962; Myers, 1973). A review of contemporary practices reflects this belief. Most elementary schools use a self-contained structure at the primary levels and gradually introduce departmentalization into the organizational structure. Educators also agree the structure selected should be determined by the needs of the specific population to be served, the educational goals and philosophy, the competencies of the staff, and available resources (e.g., Bahner, 1965; Gibb, 1962; Grooms, 1967; "Toward Improved School Organization," 1961).

The results of a literature review failed to demonstrate that organizational structure has a significant impact on the education of elementary students. Attempts to improve or evaluate instruction must therefore be redirected toward other factors. The limited number of recent studies exploring the impact of organizational structure and the preponderance of research examining factors that contribute to effective schools, suggest that professional educators have reached a similar conclusion (e.g., Bicket, 1983; Brookover & Lazotte, 1979; Cohen, 1981; Edmonds, 1979; Edmonds, 1982; Fonstad, 1973; Mackenzie, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Squires, 1981).

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SURVEY OF UNIVERSITIES

Presented by

*Mary Jo Briedis
Christine Clogg
Harry Elder*

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to determine current theory regarding school organizational structures presented in teacher preparation programs at universities in the Midwest. Specific attention was given to determining:

1. If university departments of education have a philosophy regarding the appropriate organizational structure for elementary schools;
2. The personal philosophies of elementary and educational administration department chairs among these universities;
3. Perceptions of emerging trends in the organizational structures employed at the elementary level.

Method

Subjects

Subjects in this study included the chairs of elementary education and educational administration departments at twenty-five universities in the Midwest. The universities sampled included eighteen member schools of the Midwest Region Holmes Group, and other major universities in Iowa and surrounding states (see Appendix A for a list of the universities sampled). Seventy-six percent of the subjects surveyed responded.

Questionnaire

Subjects were asked to describe the philosophies of their university departments and their personal views regarding departmentalized and self-contained structures at the primary and intermediate elementary grade levels (see Appendix B). For the purpose of this study, subjects were provided with the following definitions:

Self-contained: Students spend the entire day with one teacher. Some individual students may be pulled out to go to supplemental and/or resource teachers.

Departmentalization: Specialists teach curricular areas in which they have special training or interest.

Procedures

Initially, questionnaires were mailed to department chairs. Follow-up phone interviews were conducted to improve the rate of return.

Report of Findings

Comments qualifying responses indicated the need to refine the definitions used in the study. Results were summarized according to the following definitions:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Self-contained: | Students are assigned to one teacher for the majority of the day. They may receive art, music, and physical education from specialized teachers. |
| Semi-departmentalized: | Students are assigned to one teacher for the majority of the day and receive instruction from one additional teacher. They may also receive art, music, and physical education from specialized teachers. |
| Departmentalized: | Students receive instruction from three or more teachers during the day. They may also receive art, music, and physical education from specialized teachers. |

Primary Grades

Six respondents (sixteen percent) stated their departments had specific philosophies regarding appropriate organizational structures for primary elementary grade levels. Of those, five supported self-contained or semi-departmentalized structures which could include team teaching or ungraded classrooms. One respondent failed to describe their philosophy in greater detail. Thirty-two respondents (84 percent) stated their departments had no specific philosophy regarding organizational structures appropriate for the primary level. One respondent commented, however, their program emphasized the self-contained structure. Another respondent stated that their department required education majors to minor in a specific subject area to be effective in either departmentalized or self-contained settings. While a majority of departments do not have a philosophy regarding self-contained and departmentalized classrooms, those who have a departmental philosophy are in support of self-contained or semi-departmentalized structures at the primary grades.

The second and third questions addressed the respondent's personal philosophy regarding organizational structures at the primary level. Twenty-eight respondents (74 percent) preferred the self-contained setting. Supporting comments included:

1. Provides more stability in our changing society.
2. Provides more opportunity for the teacher to know the student better.
3. Provides variety for the teachers and better teacher pupil identification or bonding.
4. Provides a more nurturing learning environment that addresses socialization concerns.

Three respondents (eight percent) stated that in addition to art, music, and physical education, subjects such as science and foreign language could be departmentalized. Two respondents (five percent) preferred departmentalization. Four respondents (eleven percent) stated they had no preference commenting that:

1. Learning depends more on teachers than structures.
2. Organizational structures have almost no influence on the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Well-prepared teachers working in suitable conditions are the most critical variable.

One respondent (three percent) supported team teaching, multi-age grouping, and/or differentiated staffing instead of self-contained or departmentalized classrooms.

Question four surveyed perceived trends in organizational structure. Sixteen respondents (42 percent) reported a trend toward more self-contained classrooms at the primary level. More teaming, cooperative learning and regrouping by skill level were also seen as trends in these classrooms. Ten respondents (26 percent) saw the trend to be toward more departmentalized classrooms. Four respondents (eleven percent) did not respond to the question. Eight respondents (21 percent) did not see one organizational structure predominating over the other.

Intermediate Grades

Seven respondents (eighteen percent) stated that their departments had specific philosophies regarding the organizational structure appropriate at intermediate grade levels. Twenty-eight percent of these emphasized a self-contained structure. Another 28 percent recommended a semi-departmentalized structure. Fourteen percent emphasized a

departmentalized structure. The final 28 percent did not specify the nature of their philosophy. As with the primary grades, the majority of departments (82 percent) did not have a specific philosophy regarding the organizational structure for intermediate grades.

The second and third questions addressed the respondent's personal philosophy regarding the organizational structure for intermediate grade levels. Eleven respondents (29 percent) preferred the self-contained setting. Eight respondents (21 percent) preferred a semi-departmentalized classroom. Additional comments included:

1. In addition to art, music, and physical education, subjects such as science, math, and foreign language could be departmentalized.
2. More team teaching.
3. Liked the middle school philosophy and multi-age units.
4. Departmentalization is appropriate at upper grades only when course content becomes more specialized.

Seven respondents (nineteen percent) preferred departmentalization at the intermediate grades. They commented that it offers students access to instructors with greater subject matter knowledge. Students become more independent learners and can deal with change better. Ten respondents (26 percent) had no preference. Again it was stated that learning depends more on teachers than structure. Organizational structures have almost no influence on the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Well-prepared teachers working in suitable conditions are the most critical variable. Two respondents (five percent) had preferences other than self-contained or departmentalized settings. They preferred team teaching, multi-age grouping, differentiated staffing, and skill grouping with departmentalization in some fields.

Question four surveyed perceived trends. Twenty-three respondents (60 percent) reported a trend toward more departmentalized intermediate grade classrooms. Four respondents (eleven percent) saw a trend toward more self-contained classrooms. No responses were received from eight respondents (21 percent). No significant trend was viewed by three respondents (eight percent).

Survey Comments

Some universities observed other types of organizational structures emerging in elementary schools, including:

- Team teaching
- Middle school concept
- Transition grades
- Developmental first grade
- Multi-graded units/cross-aged groupings

It appears some schools are expanding traditional structures (self-contained and departmentalized) to include some of the alternatives listed above.

The following statements were offered in response to a request for general comments:

1. There is no form by itself good or bad and no research that spells out which structure is superior. It comes down to preferences. A more rational way is to examine desired learning outcomes and then move toward the means to attain them.
2. It is not uncommon to find schools composed of differing organizational structures. Grade level organizational structures reflect financial, physical plant, and other issues of a business nature.
3. Teacher preferences and preparation should be considered first before adopting a system-wide plan. A better solution is to select an organizational pattern at the building level where knowledge of teacher strengths and weaknesses can be considered. Uniform patterns in large districts ignore all that we know about the research of human learning, instruction, and effective schooling.

Modifying the definitions of the organizational structures after the surveys were returned complicated interpreting the results. In addition, sampling procedures used in this study prohibit interpreting the results as representative of philosophies of all universities in the Midwest. However, the following conclusions are offered as preliminary evidence of current perspectives on organizational structures at the elementary level among teacher preparation universities.

Conclusions

1. The majority of universities surveyed had no departmental philosophies regarding self-contained and departmentalized organizational structures at the primary or intermediate grade levels.
2. The majority of persons surveyed personally preferred the self-contained classroom structure at the primary grades.
3. At the intermediate grades, there was less correlation between personal preferences of the persons surveyed. No single organizational structure was preferred by the majority.
4. Regarding trends seen by the universities towards self-contained or departmentalized classrooms at the primary grades, there was not a majority viewpoint. A trend toward departmentalized classrooms was seen at the intermediate grades.
5. Other major emerging trends seen by universities include team teaching and the middle school concept.

Appendix A

Universities Surveyed

Universities from which responses were received include:

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Drake University
Des Moines, Iowa

The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

The University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, Nebraska

University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota

The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

Ohio University
Athens, Ohio

University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

The University of South Dakota
Vermillion, South Dakota

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Champaign, Illinois

Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana

Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

University of Wisconsin at Madison
Madison, Wisconsin

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado

University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas

University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

University of Missouri at Columbia
Columbia, Missouri

Appendix B

Letter to the Universities

Survey to the Universities

August 19, 1988

Department of Elementary Education, Chairperson
Department of Educational Administration, Chairperson

Re: Study of Departmentalized and Self-contained Elementary School Organizational Structures

The Des Moines Public Schools Elementary Department is preparing a report for our school board concerning the use of departmentalized and self-contained classrooms in elementary schools. We are surveying universities throughout the Midwest to determine their philosophies of elementary school organization structures.

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are being used:

Self-contained: Students spend the entire day with one teacher. Some individual students may be pulled out to go to supplemental and/or resource teachers.

Departmentalization: Specialists teach curricular areas in which they have special training or interest.

We would appreciate any help you could lend to our research efforts. Enclosed is a questionnaire which we hope you will complete and return in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by Monday, September 19, 1988. Responses will remain confidential.

We are looking forward to receiving your response. The report will be shared with your university upon your request. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Don Brubaker
Executive Director, Elementary Education

Enclosure

SURVEY OF UNIVERSITIES REGARDING DEPARTMENTALIZED AND
SELF-CONTAINED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

Completed by:

Name _____

Position/Department _____

University _____

School Address _____

Please respond briefly to the following questions in the space provided.

1. Does your department have a philosophy regarding departmentalized and self-contained elementary school organizational structures?

At the primary grades ☐ Yes ☐ No
At the intermediate grades ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please briefly describe.

2. What is your philosophy regarding self-contained and departmentalized organizational structures?

3. Which do you favor at the primary grades: Check one.

☐ self-contained
☐ departmentalization
☐ no preference

Which do you favor at the intermediate grades: Check one.

☐ self-contained
☐ departmentalization
☐ no preference

4. Which trend do you see in the organizational structures of elementary schools? Circle your response.

Primary Grades

(more/less) departmentalization
(more/less) self-contained

Intermediate Grades

(more/less) departmentalization
(more/less) self-contained

5. What other types or organizational structures do you see emerging in elementary schools?

6. Any additional comments:

**A STUDY OF THE DEGREE OF
DEPARTMENTALIZATION IN
MIDWESTERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Presented by

Keith Banwart
Lucy Hughes
David Lingwall

Introduction

This study surveyed the degree of departmentalization in elementary schools in the Midwest. Answers were sought to the following questions concerning the organizational structure of selected districts.

1. To what degree are the school districts organized departmentally?
2. Does the degree of departmentalization vary by grade level?

Method

Subjects

Twenty-four school districts were selected from Iowa and surrounding states. School districts within the state of Iowa represented the eight largest districts. Other districts were selected from: Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Eighteen questionnaires were completed and returned. Follow-up calls elicited responses from two additional school districts, resulting in a response rate of 83.33 percent.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to obtain information concerning the number of elementary schools in each district, total elementary enrollment, and degree of departmentalization employed at each grade level (see Appendix). Respondents were asked to describe the organizational structure for each elementary grade according to five categories. The categories were based on the definitions outlined in the introduction. To provide a complete hierarchy, "self-contained" was further delineated into "totally self-contained" and "self-contained using specialists".

The categories that appeared on the survey are defined below.

1. Totally self-contained. Students remain with one teacher for the entire day:
Students may be pulled out for supplemental instruction.
2. Self-contained with specialists. Students receive instruction from specialists in one or more of the following: art, music, or physical education.

3. Semi-departmentalized. Students receive instruction from specialists in one or more but not all of the following areas: math, reading, social studies, science, health, or language arts.
4. Totally departmentalized.
5. Other.

The four possible responses were none, some, most, and all for each organizational structure at every grade level.

Procedures

A questionnaire was mailed to all superintendents in selected midwestern school districts. Each survey was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the research and asking for their help in determining the degree of departmentalization.

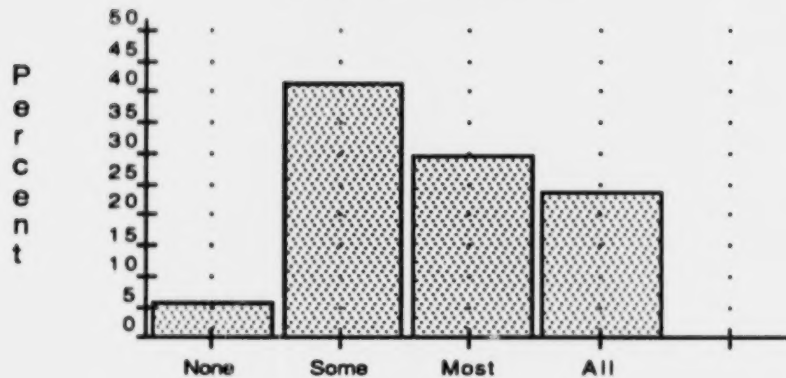
Results

Degree of Departmentalization in Midwestern Elementary Schools

To facilitate reporting, the results from the survey were collapsed into two categories. Respondents whose organizational structure was totally self-contained or self-contained using specialists were both categorized as "self-contained". Those districts who used any degree of departmentalization were collapsed into the category "departmentalized".

When asked to indicate the degree of departmentalization in their schools, 5.9 percent of the respondents replied "none", 41.1 percent reported "some", 29.4 percent "most", and 23.6 percent said that "all" of the schools in their district used some form of departmentalization (Figure 1, page 37).

Figure 1
Degree of Departmentalization
Among Elementary Schools

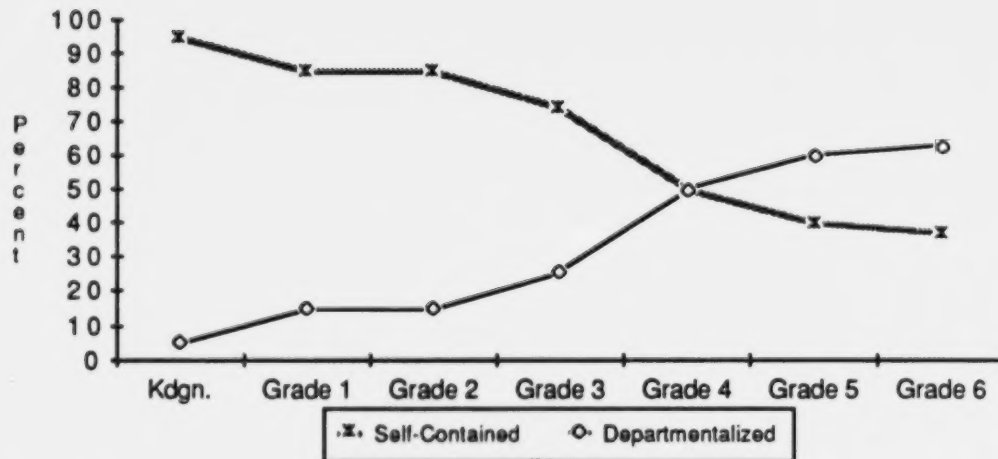


Degree of Departmentalization By Grade Level

Figure 2 illustrates the degree of departmentalization by grade level. The results of a Chi-square test of independent samples indicate that there was a significant difference between the degree of departmentalization among grade levels ($\chi^2 = 40.674, p < .001$). A review of the data demonstrates a tendency to use greater degrees of departmentalization as grade level increases (see Figure 2, page 38). For example, the distribution of the percent of districts using a self-contained organizational structure across grade level ranged from 95 percent in kindergarten to 37 percent in grade six. The distribution of the percent of districts using some degree of departmentalization across grade level ranged from five percent in kindergarten to 63 percent in grade six.

Figure 2

Degree of Departmentalization
by Grade Level



Conclusions

This study was designed to obtain evidence of the degree of departmentalization among elementary schools in the Midwest. The results indicate the majority of districts surveyed use some form of departmentalization and the degree of departmentalization increases with grade level. While districts described the organizational structure at the primary grade levels as predominantly self-contained, none of the districts responding were using a totally self-contained structure in grades four, five, and six. Limitations in the sampling procedures preclude interpreting these results as representative of practices employed in the Midwest in general; however, they do provide preliminary evidence to suggest that at least some schools begin departmentalization as early as kindergarten.

Appendix A
Survey Cover Letter
and
Survey Questionnaire

DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
1800 GRAND AVENUE
DES MOINES, IOWA 50307

August 15, 1988

Dear:

The Des Moines Elementary Department is in the process of preparing an administrative response for our school board concerning the use of departmentalization in elementary schools. We are surveying our own school district, the Iowa Urban Network School Districts and school districts of comparable size throughout the Midwest to determine what form of organization and structure is currently being used in elementary schools. We will also be surveying universities and doing an extensive review of the literature in this area.

We need your help to determine the extent to which your district utilizes departmentalization or some form of departmentalization. Enclosed is a copy of our survey which we hope you will complete and return in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by September 19, 1988. As a point of reference, we are using the following definition for our study. Anything else is considered a form of departmentalization.

Self-contained: Students remain with one teacher for the entire day. Students may be pulled out for supplemental instruction.

Thank you for your cooperation. We are looking forward to receiving your district's data and including it in our report. Since the data we will include in our administrative response will be of importance to other school districts as well as our own, we are willing to share the report with your school district upon your request.

Sincerely,

Don Brubaker
Executive Director, Elementary Education

DB/jk

Enclosure

SURVEY OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS REGARDING DEPARTMENTALIZED AND
SELF-CONTAINED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

1. Name of school district _____
2. Number of elementary schools in your district _____
3. Total elementary enrollment in your district _____

4. Do you have schools that utilize some form of departmentalization?

Circle one please - None Some Most All

5. Please fill out the form below to indicate the extent your district utilizes some form of departmentalization. The term specialist refers to a teacher with special training, strengths, or interests.

Please circle the appropriate letter according to the following legend. Each organizational structure should have one letter circled for each grade level that you consider to be elementary.

N=No Elementary Buildings, S=Some (more than one but less than 50%), M=Most (more than 50% of schools), A=All

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Totally self- contained</u>	<u>Self-contained</u> Using specialists in one or more of the following: Art, Music, Phys Ed	<u>Departmentalized</u> Using specialists in one or more but not all of the following areas: Math, Reading, Social Studies, Science, Health, Language Arts	<u>Totally Departmentalized</u>	<u>Other</u> (please explain below #6)
K	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A
1	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A
2	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A
3	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A
4	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A
5	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A
6	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A	N S M A

6. Please explain other _____

7. Do you want a copy of the report? Yes No

8. Please, if at all possible, complete and return by September 19, 1988, to:

Don Brubaker
Executive Director, Elementary Education
Des Moines Public Schools
1800 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50307
If you have questions, call at 515-242-7725.

**A STUDY OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES
OF
DES MOINES CLASSROOMS**

Presented by

*Karen Bush
Helen Oliver
Judith Tredway*

Introduction

The history of structures used to organize elementary schools in the Des Moines Public schools is characterized by five phases. Departmentalized instruction was introduced in grades four and five in 1921 as an extension of practices employed in grades six through eight. From 1933-1966 the unit (departmentalized) approach was emphasized in elementary schools across the district. Students in grades kindergarten through four received instruction in all subject areas with one teacher. Students in grades five and six spent one-half day with one teacher and received instruction in science, social science, and language arts. During the other one-half day, students received instruction in art, music, physical education, health, and math with teachers specializing in each of these subject areas.

In 1983 elementary schools were organized in a K-5 structure. At that time, the self-contained structure included using certified teachers for music, art, and physical education in addition to the homeroom instructor. Building staff was given the authority to incorporate additional departmentalization to meet the needs of their students. In 1986 a new science curriculum was adopted that emphasized use of manipulatives and practical experiences. Because of additional demands imposed on teachers, the curriculum committee encouraged elementary schools to modify the self-contained structure so that science could be taught by one teacher at each grade level or throughout the building. The recommendation was observed to various degrees in elementary schools across the district. The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of departmentalization currently incorporated into the organizational structures of elementary schools in Des Moines.

Method

Subjects

Principals at the 41 elementary schools in the Des Moines School District were asked to describe the organizational structure employed in their buildings. Responses were received from all of the principals surveyed.

Questionnaire

Principals were asked to identify the subjects taught by each teacher with whom students would interact on a daily or weekly basis, the number of sections of each grade level offered, and the current enrollment at each school (see Appendix). It should be recognized that teachers may team or exchange classes for specific units of instruction which could alter the findings at specific

times of the year. Principals were asked to report their perceptions of parental concern about the degree of departmentalization employed in their buildings, and who they believed should determine the organizational structure of the building.

Procedures

Questionnaires were distributed through the Department of Elementary Education.

Report of Findings

Degree of Departmentalization

The analysis of the organizational structures employed at each grade level indicates an overwhelming majority of grades one through three utilize a self-contained structure (see Table 1). About one third of the schools utilize this structure at grades four and five.

Table 1
Schools Utilizing a Self-Contained Structure

Grade	% of Schools	# of Schools
1	87%	34
2	90%	35
3	64%	25
4	33%	13
5	33%	13

The results also indicate that semi-departmentalization is used to some extent at all elementary levels throughout the district (see Table 2).

Table 2
Schools Utilizing a Semi-Departmentalized Structure

Grade	% of Schools	# of Schools
1	13%	5
2	10%	4
3	23%	9
4	28%	11
5	26%	10

Departmentalization is also used to some extent in grades three, four, and five (see Table 3).

Table 3
Schools Utilizing a Departmentalized Structure

Grade	% of Schools	# of Schools
3	13%	5
4	39%	15
5	41%	16

Figures 1-5 profile the organizational structures employed by grade level. While the self-contained structure predominates at the primary levels, departmentalization is gradually introduced in the intermediate levels. The greatest variability occurs in grades four and five.

Figure 1
Distribution of Departmentalization In Grade 1

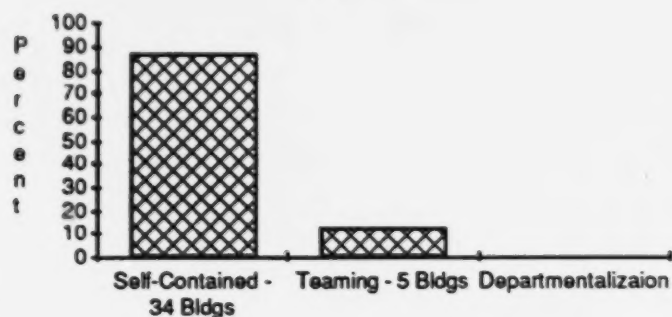


Figure 2
Distribution of Departmentalization In Grade 2

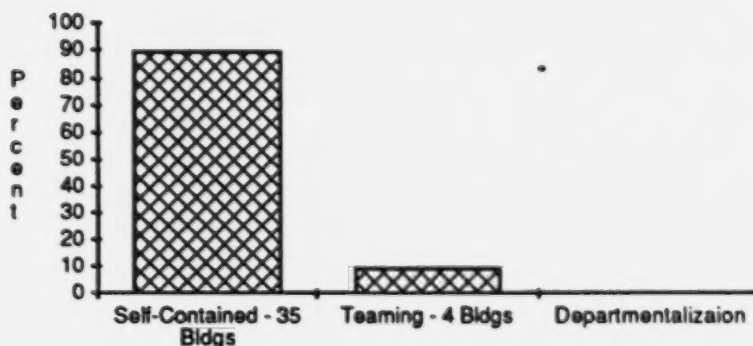


Figure 3
Distribution of Departmentalization In Grade 3

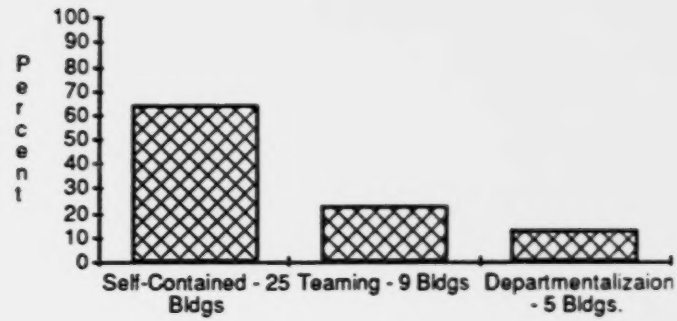


Figure 4
Distribution of Departmentalization In Grade 4

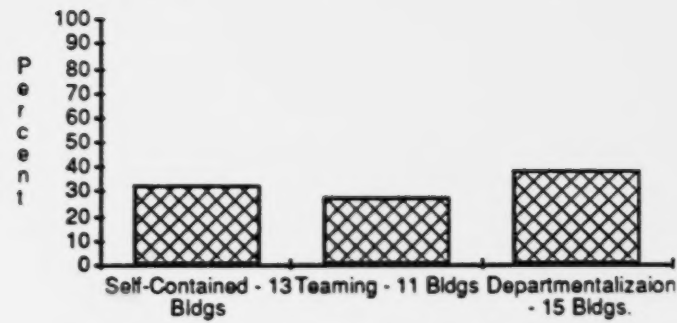
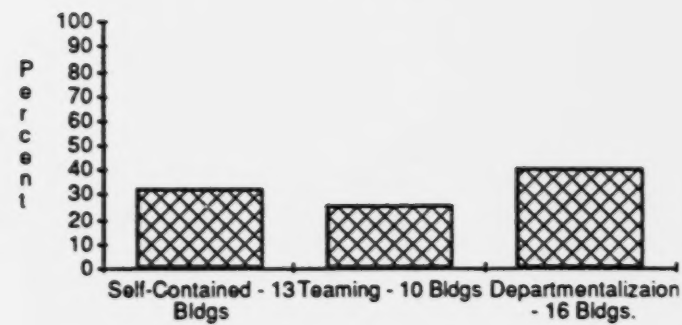


Figure 5
Distribution of Departmentalization In Grade 5



Teacher-Student Contact

Table 5 indicates the number of teachers seen by a class in schools utilizing a departmentalized structure. Most of the departmentalization that occurs in grades three through five is limited to three subject areas. These consist of subjects other than art, music, and physical education. While six buildings reported departmentalizing in four subject areas in grades four and five, only one building departmentalized to this extent in grade three. Only one school reported departmentalizing in five areas in all intermediate grade levels.

Table 5
Number of Teachers Seen by a Class in Schools Using a Departmentalized Structure

Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5	
# of Schools	# of Teachers	# of Schools	# of Teachers	# of Schools	# of Teachers
3	3	8	3	9	3
1	4	6	4	6	4
1	5	1	5	1	5

Additional Findings

1. Schools with more sections per grade level often choose a departmentalized structure.
2. Results indicate 85 percent of principals felt parents support the current organizational structure used at their schools. It appears that parental concern is isolated.
3. Results indicate that principals feel professional educators are most qualified to make decisions regarding the organizational structure of a school. These decisions should be based upon student needs and teacher subject area expertise.

Conclusions

The self-contained structure predominates at the primary levels while departmentalization is gradually introduced in the intermediate levels. Larger schools with more classrooms at each grade level often decide to departmentalize. The greatest variability occurs in grades four and five.

Principals reported parents rarely expressed dissatisfaction with the organizational structures used in their school. Principals also felt the staff should determine the organizational structure of their building .

Appendix
Des Moines Classroom Organizational Structure Survey

DES MOINES CLASSROOM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE SURVEY

1. School: _____ Enrollment: _____
2. Number of classroom sections by grade level:
 K _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ TOTAL: _____
3. Below are boxes that contain a list of subjects taught to the students in your school. At the left of each set is a grade level column. Complete one row for each grade level. In each box to the right of the grade level, indicate the courses that are taught by teacher 1, teacher 2, teacher 3, etc. by placing an X in front of the subjects that are taught by each teacher. For example, if one teacher teaches reading, handwriting, and spelling, place an X in front of those three in column 1. If the second teacher teaches math and science, place an X in front of those two in column 2, and so forth.

GRADE	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
1	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading
	language	language	language	language	language	language
	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling
	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting
	math	math	math	math	math	math
	science	science	science	science	science	science
	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.
	health	health	health	health	health	health

Number of teachers seen by a first grade class _____

GRADE	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
2	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading
	language	language	language	language	language	language
	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling
	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting
	math	math	math	math	math	math
	science	science	science	science	science	science
	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.
	health	health	health	health	health	health

Number of teachers seen by a second grade class _____

GRADE	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
3	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading
	language	language	language	language	language	language
	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling
	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting
	math	math	math	math	math	math
	science	science	science	science	science	science
	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.
	health	health	health	health	health	health

Number of teachers seen by a third grade class _____

GRADE	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
4	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading
	language	language	language	language	language	language
	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling
	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting
	math	math	math	math	math	math
	science	science	science	science	science	science
	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.
	health	health	health	health	health	health

Number of teachers seen by a fourth grade class _____

GRADE	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
5	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading	reading
	language	language	language	language	language	language
	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling	spelling
	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting	handwriting
	math	math	math	math	math	math
	science	science	science	science	science	science
	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.	soc. sci.
	health	health	health	health	health	health

Number of teachers seen by a fifth grade class _____

4. If your organizational structure cannot be accommodated here, please describe it on the back of this paper.

5. Circle the word that best describes the level of parent concern regarding your organizational program.

POSITIVE: none few many

NEGATIVE: none few many

6. Should the principal and teachers determine the organizational structure for their school?

yes no (CIRCLE ONE)

Why?

7. Do you favor one organizational structure over the other?

yes no (CIRCLE ONE)

Why?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Presented by

The Committee

<i>Keith Banwart</i>	<i>Lucy Hughes</i>
<i>Mary Jo Briedis</i>	<i>David Lingwall</i>
<i>Don Brubaker</i>	<i>Helen Oliver</i>
<i>Karen Bush</i>	<i>Lois Smith</i>
<i>Christine Clogg</i>	<i>Judith Tredway</i>
<i>Jan Drees</i>	<i>Amy Welch</i>
<i>Harry Elder</i>	

Summary and Conclusions

In response to a request from the Board of Directors of Des Moines Public Schools, a study was conducted to identify contemporary thought regarding organizational practice at the elementary level. Between June and November 1988, four committees composed of elementary teachers and administrators, worked independently to review over 1500 abstracts and journal articles, survey philosophies of 25 university Elementary Education in Educational Administration Department chairpersons in the Midwest, and assess the organizational structures currently employed in 24 schools in the Midwest and all elementary schools in Des Moines.

The results of the study suggest the organizational structure has little impact on student achievement or social adjustment at the elementary level. Results of research studies and expert opinion supporting either a departmentalized or a self-contained structure are inconsistent and inconclusive. In practice, departmentalization is incorporated into the primary grade levels, kindergarten through third, to a limited degree; however, the extent of departmentalization increases in the intermediate grade levels four and five. Current practices employed in the Des Moines schools are consistent with those found in research.

A synthesis of the results also supports the following conclusions:

1. There are advantages and disadvantages to all organizational structures. Research fails to indicate that either a departmentalized or a self-contained structure provides more effective instruction.
2. Learning depends more on teachers and teacher effectiveness than organizational structure. Well-prepared teachers working in suitable conditions are the most critical variable.
3. Effective instruction consists of an appropriate balance of attention to content and to the needs of the children. The organizational structure employed should depend on the particular needs of students served, the skills and interests of the faculty, and available resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented by

The Committee

<i>Keith Banwart</i>	<i>Lucy Hughes</i>
<i>Mary Jo Briedis</i>	<i>David Lingwall</i>
<i>Don Brubaker</i>	<i>Helen Oliver</i>
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<i>Jan Drees</i>	<i>Amy Welch</i>
<i>Harry Elder</i>	

Recommendations

The following guidelines were recommended to the Board of Directors of the Des Moines Public Schools for establishing the organizational structure of elementary schools.

1. School principals and instructional staff should consider student needs and academic growth, the mission of the school, available resources, enrollment, parental input, and teacher strengths when determining the organizational structure of the school.
2. The organizational structure used in each building should be shared with the community through the Building Advisory Council, parent handbooks, and orientations.
3. Each building staff should review the school's organizational structure annually.
4. Grades K-3 should be self-contained or semi-departmentalized. Grades 4-5 may be self-contained or semi-departmentalized or utilize limited departmentalization. Any exceptions to these guidelines should be approved by the Director of Elementary Education.

The following are definitions to be used in developing the organizational structure of each school.

1. *Self-Contained: Students see only one teacher for their instructional needs.
2. *Semi-Departmentalized: Students see no more than two teachers for their instructional needs.
3. *Limited Departmentalization: Students see no more than three or four teachers for their instructional needs.

* All K-5 students also see a separate art, music, and physical education teacher for their instructional needs in these curricular areas.